



**Educational Resources for Children, Inc.**

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RE: Testimony to the Appropriations Committee  
In Support of Funding for After School Programs

BY: Claire C. Hall, M.Ed., Executive Director of ERfC

DATE: February 21, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here this evening.

My name is Claire Hall and I am the Executive Director of Educational Resources for Children, (also known as ERfC) located in Enfield, CT. ERfC has been providing out-of-school time activities for Enfield children since 1994. ERfC provides school-year and expanded summer learning opportunities for over 350 children.

I am here tonight on behalf of the children and families we serve. The news that **The After School Grant** funding in the State Department of Education budget has been cut is deeply disturbing on a number of levels to all of us who care about and advocate for children. I urge you to reinstate the \$4.5 million dollars for **The After School Grant**.

**The After School Grant** makes a difference to the many families we serve. Our middle school program operates for 181 school days, five days a week as well as six weeks during summer vacation. The children who enroll in this program cannot afford after school activities. Many of our families work more than one job and multiple shifts. Many of the children enrolled struggle with academics, social skills, and overall health issues.

**The After School Grant** funding makes it possible for children in our community to engage in quality after-school activities during their time away from parent supervision between 3 and 6 PM. Studies show that youth left unsupervised during after school hours are at a greater risk of pregnancy, truancy, receiving poor grades, mental depression and substance abuse than the students engaged in after-school programming.

Our after- school programs complement the work of schools and provide additional learning alternatives and enrichment opportunities for students. Quality afterschool programs funded by **The After School Grant** do more than provide safe places for our children. Programs like ours improve health and education outcomes, and help children to connect to their community. As advocates for children, we are responsible to create more opportunities for youth who need both the independence and guidance that occur in quality afterschool programs.

In 2011-2012 school year, Enfield children enrolled in our after-school programs showed positive outcomes. 80% of students enrolled increased their grades in all major subject areas. Teacher survey results indicated that 66% of students enrolled showed an overall improvement in homework, attendance, attitude toward school, class participation, and getting along with other students.

Here is a story that reminds us how important it is to fund quality after-school programs:

*Frank hated school. He claimed that his homework was too hard. "Why should I do it?" he asked his teachers. "It won't be right anyway." He often missed the bus and was chronically absent. He said he didn't own the right gadgets or wear designer clothes, and he wasn't cool or popular.*

*Although his mom was supportive, she's a single, working parent, and because she never graduated from high school, she was unable to help Frank with his homework. She encouraged him to enroll in JFK After School. When Frank first enrolled, he didn't interact with other students. He ate alone, he still refused to do homework, and he rarely spoke. As the days went by, Frank began to tentatively connect with staff, but still worried about fitting in with his peers. He was hesitant to join in activities, but his desire to learn video production propelled him forward.*

*Over time, Frank began to feel more comfortable, and gradually, the video production program became Frank's second home. The instructor worked with Frank to create a storyboard with input from other students, and Frank became the leader of the production. Once the storyboard was complete and the script written, Frank chose his actors. Over the next four weeks, Frank worked hand-in-hand with other students to finish the script and direct his video.*

*Frank never looked back. For the rest of the school year, Frank was a critical part of the studio team's success. He completed his homework, a prerequisite of continuing to attend the program, and his grades gradually improved. Frank says he is more comfortable with himself, more confident with his peers, and willing to speak up in class. For the first time, he participates in class discussions. Frank has connected with a passion for learning that, if he chooses, can inspire him for the rest of his life.*

ERfC is committed to working with community and state partners to see how we can together be a voice for our children. We know firsthand how high quality after-school programs help create lifelong learners. Our programs engage children (particularly disadvantaged youth) and result in improved grades, work habits, school attendance, social skills, and reduce risky behavior.

Please work together to reinstate **The After School Grant** so children in all Connecticut communities can realize their full potential as responsible, contributing citizens. We are all willing to work hard to continue developing successful, high-quality after-school programs to help protect our children, strengthen families, divert youth from the juvenile justice system, improve attitudes toward school, attendance rates, and grades, and provide children with a safe environment, healthy recreation, and appropriate social development support.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this information with you.